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ABSTRACT

An attempt to develop understandings about how individuals experience change within organizational contexts is presented. Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) research provides background for how evaluation utilization can be defined and why it might be useful to view evaluation as an innovation. A change process-based definition of evaluation utilization is that (1) use of evaluation is a process; (2) it must be assessed at the individual level as well as for the organization as a whole; and (3) it must be considered across evaluations within an adopting organization, or across organizations for regional and national study. To assess use would entail conducting focused interviews to assess Levels of Use (LoU) and development of an Innovation Configuration Checklist that could be assessed through a combination of interview and observation procedures. The resultant data could be analyzed to identify and describe the various configurations of the evaluation that were being used. Implications for practice and research are discussed.
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Viewing Evaluation Utilization As An Innovation^{1,2}

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INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The charge to this author was to address 3 questions:

1. What is evaluation utilization?
2. How do you determine utilization?
3. What are implications for practice and research?

Answering the first question requires definition of what is meant by "utilization." For the second question an analysis of research methodologies is needed. Given analyses and answers to the first two questions, it seems reasonable that through extrapolation implications can be drawn for evaluation practice and research.

Before proposing answers to these three questions it is important to point out that I do not see myself as an "evaluator." Rather, my research examines the change process in schools and colleges. In this research we are attempting to develop understandings about how individuals experience change within organizational contexts. Thus, I bring a different set of assumptions and perspectives to the question, what is evaluation utilization? At the same time it appears to me that the concepts and tools that have been developed out

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TM 820 877

of change process research have direct application in evaluation. Thus, the title, viewing evaluation utilization as an innovation.

The Change Process and Utilization

Since my training and work are not in evaluation a first step in preparing this paper was to review some of the recent evaluation literature. In addition, I talked to a non randomly selected sample of evaluators. This was done in an attempt to develop a better understanding of the utilization issues that evaluators are presently addressing. Another reason for the survey was to develop an understanding of how evaluation utilization has been defined by evaluators.

Evaluator's Definition of Utilization

Two useful references that were suggested to me were, Utilizing Evaluation, edited by James A. Ciarlo and Using Evaluations: Does Evaluation Make a Difference by Alkin, Daillias and White. The chapter by Carol Weiss in Ciarlo was particularly helpful.

Until recently evaluators seem to have defined utilization in two ways.

a) Utilization has been defined in terms of an analysis of the decisions that were made by managers. The more closely decisions follow the trends and implications of the evaluation data the greater the utilization.

b) The second way of determining utilization is through examination of the "impact" of the decisions. Within this way there appears to be some debate about whether one looks only at immediate and/or long-term impacts of the decisions.

It appears that utilization has been defined in terms of consequences of use of the evaluation data. That is, decisions are analyzed or the impact of decisions are analyzed, to see whether or not they followed the suggestions

made in the evaluation. Utilization is defined in terms of decisions based on evaluations and observable consequences of these decisions. There also seems to be some value implications that the bigger the consequences of the decision the more utilization there was.

Evaluation as an Innovation

For a change process researcher this emphasis upon analysis of decisions made and the impact of decisions was an interesting and somewhat curious way to define utilization. Since utilization, for someone who is studying change and implementation in organizations, focuses more upon use than it does the consequences of use. For change to be successful it is typically assumed that there will be use of the "innovation."

The innovation is the process or product that is to be used. This may be something that is new or different or it may only represent a small adjustment to past practice. Typically an innovation includes descriptive materials, special training to give users the needed skills and there are persons who are seen as expert in use of the innovation. These experts provide training and consultation in how to use their innovation. Most experts are truly dedicated to their innovation and believe that most if not all prospective users should become users.

From this frame of reference evaluations have the basic characteristics of innovations. There are materials, processes, innovation experts and users need special skills to use them. An interesting change process study would be to research the adoption of evaluations as innovations.

In addition, evaluators have many of the characteristics associated with developers of other innovations:

They know their programs well and do quality work.

They believe, truly believe, that evaluation is very important.

They have legions of followers who also truly believe.

They have policy makers who will back them and use of their "innovation."

They want their innovation used by everyone.

And they have definite ideas about what ideal evaluation use means.

Clearly use is problematic for evaluators as well as change process researchers. Evaluators are now experiencing what developers of many other innovations have been confronted with, how do you facilitate others in developing understanding of and use of evaluations? Spread of use of evaluation is now moving beyond the earliest more innovative adopters. Evaluators are now being confronted with other adopter groups who are less interested in or less able to immediately use and accept the merit of evaluation (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Evaluators are having to consider such change process variables as dissemination, adoption, implementation and institutionalization.

In addition, as developers of other innovations have found out, very few adopters use evaluations in the ideal way. Adopters tend to make all sorts of adjustments (i.e. adaptations) and changes in the innovation, in this case evaluations. They may misinterpret or they may overly emphasize certain portions of the evaluation results and completely ignore others. Thus, evaluators as innovation developers are confronted with the problem of the degree of fidelity as well as integrity of use of their evaluation findings.

In fact some users can really make a mess out of use of a particular innovation. There are times where it is quite conceivable that how evaluators and evaluation findings are used will be seen as "malpractice" by evaluators. With the increased spread in use of evaluations it is appropriate for evaluators to be concerned about utilization at this time.

As the above discussion has attempted to illustrate, utilization is not a unique problem to evaluation. It is a problem that all innovation developers are confronted with. However, the utilization question still must be answered specifically for evaluation. Perhaps some of the research and concepts that have been developed in knowledge utilization and change research can be of help.

Utilization as a Process

With these ideas as context, let's examine how a change process researcher would define utilization. In doing this I shall also attempt to point out a couple of inconsistencies in how utilization has been defined in the evaluation literature. To do this, some description of the research that has been going on with the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, Wallace & Dossett, 1973) will be used. This research can help provide illustrations, as well as background for how evaluation utilization can be defined and why it might be useful to view evaluation as an innovation.

Two of the basic assertions underlying the CBAM model are:

(1) Change is a process, not an event. Implementation of an innovation does not happen instantaneously. There is a process that takes time and has its own natural pattern for unfolding. For example, the sending out of the final report or making an announcement at a board meeting does not result in instantaneous change.

(2) The individual is the primary unit of adoption. Groups and organizations as a whole must be considered, but what individuals do will make or break most change efforts. Understanding how the individual views and uses the innovation is critical to facilitating change and assessing impact.

To translate change process research concepts to the domain of evaluation utilization is quite easy. Thus, the beginning definition of evaluation utilization would be:

(1) Use of evaluation is a process, not an event. Evaluation findings, evaluation reports and recommendations cannot be delivered as a one time occurrence with the expectation that use will automatically follow. Rather, there is a process that can unfold where understanding, use and increases in sophistication about how to use evaluation gradually develop.

(2) Use of evaluations must be assessed at the individual level as well as for the organization as a whole.

(3) Use must be considered across evaluations within an adopting organization, or across organizations for regional and national study. For most individuals and most organizations use entails more than understanding and making a decision or set of decisions based upon one report or the results of one evaluation study. Rather, use should be viewed across a series of evaluation reports and evaluation studies.

One methodological implication of this view is that one time snapshots will not provide the needed information to judge utilization. Rather, the methodology for assessing utilization require cross-sectional and longitudinal designs. The sampling should be done across evaluation studies and reports within an organization or across a range of institutions if it is a study of large-scale use of one evaluation.

Two Basic Questions

In the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), a great deal of attention is given to defining use. If evaluation utilization was the innovation to be studied using CBAM concepts and procedures then two basic questions would need to be asked of each and every potential adopter.

(1) Is she/he using it?

(2) What is it?

To gather information about these two questions would entail assessing evaluation users/nonusers Levels of Use of the Innovation and their Innovation Configurations.

Levels of Use

To answer the first question, we would turn to the concept of Levels of Use of the Innovation (Hall, Loucks, Rutherford & Newlove, 1975). This concept grew out of our first studies of implementation at the individual level. Traditionally use had been considered to be a dichotomous variable, use or nonuse. The work with the Concern-Based model has led to distinguishing eight different Levels of Use (LoU), three nonuse levels and five use levels. These Levels of Use are summarized in Figure 1.

Basically the Levels of Use dimension describes the behaviors of individuals as they move from early exploration, to first use, to being relatively sophisticated in their use of the innovation. This is a generic concept and can be applied to any process or product innovation, including use of evaluation.

Levels of Use is measured with a specially developed focused interview procedure (Loucks, Newlove & Hall, 1976). This interview appears to be a casual conversation with each interviewee. However, a trained Levels of Use interviewer can rate a person's Level of Use in relation to any particular innovation by using special questions and probes based on the Level of Use definitions and decision points listed in Figure 1.

For this discussion one or two examples of these levels can be used to illustrate how they could be applied to the use of evaluation. For example a person at a Level of Use 0, Nonuse, is not doing anything relative to use of

Figure 1
Levels of Use of Evaluation

Levels of Use	Definition	Behavior Example
0 Nonuse	State in which the user has little or no knowledge of the innovation, no involvement with the innovation, and is doing nothing toward becoming involved.	Evaluation report is not read.
Decision Point A	Takes action to learn more detailed information about the innovation.	
I Orientation	State in which the user has recently acquired or is acquiring information about the innovation and/or has recently explored or is exploring its value orientation and its demands upon user and user system.	The evaluation report is read over. Some questions are asked of evaluators, but the evaluation is not considered in decision making.
Decision Point B	Makes a decision to use the innovation by establishing a time to begin.	
II Preparation	State in which the user is preparing for first use of the innovation.	An administrator commits resources to have an evaluation done.
Decision Point C	Changes, if any, and use are dominated by user needs.	
III Mechanical Use	State in which the user focuses most effort on the short-term, day-to-day use of the innovation with little time for reflection. Changes in use are made more to meet user needs than client needs. The user is primarily engaged in a stepwise attempt to master the tasks required to use the innovation, often resulting in disjointed and superficial use.	The principal calls a faculty meeting to consider the evaluation results, but he does not fully understand them. Everyone is confused and they reach no closure.

Figure 1-continued

Decision Point D-1	A routine pattern of use is established.	
IVA Routine	Use of the innovation is stabilized. Few, if any, changes are being made in ongoing use. Little preparation or thought is being given to improving innovation use or its consequences.	The superintendent regularly reviews evaluation information before presenting positions to the school board.
Decision Point D-2	Changes use of the innovation based on formal or informal evaluation in order to increase client outcomes	
IVB Refinement	State in which the user varies the use of the innovation to increase the impact on clients within the immediate sphere of influence. Variations are based on knowledge of both short- and long-term consequences for clients.	The director of staff development asks for a change in the workshop evaluation procedures so that she will have information for individual follow-up.
Decision Point E	Initiates changes in use of innovation based on the input of and in coordination with what colleagues are doing.	
V Integration	State in which the user is combining own efforts to use the innovation with related activities of colleagues to achieve their own sphere of influence.	Several principals decide to pool their school evaluations and to work together with the evaluator to plan the use of evaluation findings.
Decision Point F	Begins exploring alternatives to or major modifications of the innovation presently in use.	
VI Renewal	State in which the user reevaluates the quality of use of the innovation, seeks major modifications of or alternatives to present innovation to achieve increased impact on clients, examines new developments in the field, and explores new goals for self and the system.	An administrator returns from a meeting where she has just heard about a new evaluation model that can be used to test teacher competence and she wants to talk about its being used in place of the present system.

Based on the Levels of Use Concept. Hall, G. E., Hooks, S. F., Rutherford, W. L. & Newlove, B. W. Levels of use of the innovation: A framework for analyzing innovation adoption. The Journal of Teacher Education, 1975, 26(1), 52-56.

evaluation. A report has been mailed to this person, but they do not read it. A meeting is called to describe the results of the evaluation study and this person does not attend. Their knowledge is minimal and no behaviors are being taken to learn more about or to use the results of the evaluation.

This LoU 0 person can be contrasted with a person at Level of Use I, Orientation, who is exploring the evaluation findings and considering use. While a person at Level of Use II, Preparation has definitely decided to make use of the evaluation.

We typically find that first time users will be at a Level III, Mechanical Use. This is a time where there is heavy dependence on the reference materials and a disjointed and inconsistent use of the innovation.

Other persons might be observed to be at a Level of Use IVA, Routine Use, where use of evaluation has become a regular way and is stable over time. Other individuals may move to higher Levels of Use where various refinements and adaptations to increase outcomes are made.

The Levels of Use concept focuses upon behaviors; what persons are actually doing with the innovation. In the case of evaluation utilization, users at these different Levels of Use would be behaving very differently with regard to the evaluation resources that were available to them. The person at Level of Use 0 would not be doing anything. The person at a Mechanical Level of Use might be making disjointed use of evaluation reports and the evaluator. S/he might at one time make decisions that are consistent with the evaluation and another time be inconsistent. Later on their evaluation use may become more stabilized at a Routine Use. They have ways for regularly incorporating evaluation findings and evaluators into their work. Other evaluation users may start moving to higher Levels of Use and make refinements and adaptations in how they use evaluators. At higher Levels of Use they might ask the

Figure 2
Innovation Configuration Component Checklist
for Individual Use of an Evaluation

1. Review of Evaluation Reports

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Reports are read closely and findings can be quoted	Some of the reports are emphasized and a few findings are quoted.	Reports are skimmed over.	Reports have been received but not read.	Knows nothing about the reports or their existence.

2. Use of Evaluations

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Evaluators are regularly asked for information and suggestions.	Evaluators are only involved when they deliver reports.	Rarely are evaluators talked with.	There is no communication with evaluators

3. Role of Evaluation in Decision Making

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Dominant influence.	One of multiple influences.	One of multiple, cumulative influences.	Not considered.

4. Types of Decisions Where Evaluation is Used

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Forming new policy.	Substantiating previous decisions or actions.	Establishing or altering attitudes.	No clear pattern to use.

5. Program Areas Where Evaluations Are Used (check all that apply)

☐ federal programs	☐ teacher/administrator competency	☐ plant operations
☐ competency testing	☐ materials budget	☐ other
☐ staff development	☐ staffing	

evaluator to make changes in the design of future evaluations so that the evaluations could have even more impact on decisions and their activities.

Innovation Configurations

To answer the second question, "What is it?" we would turn to another CBAM concept, Innovation Configurations (Hall & Loucks, 1980). As our earlier studies focused upon implementation at the individual level, it became readily apparent that different users would adapt and sometime drastically mutate innovations as they used them. Sometimes the alterations were minor and sometimes they appeared to be major. In some instances it was not clear that any significant features of the innovation were in use, although the "user" might claim to be using the innovation. Thus, the concept of Innovation Configurations was created (Hall & Loucks, 1978).

In this concept the operational form of the innovation is examined. Key components of the innovation are identified and how these components can vary are described. A trained observer and/or interviewer can gather information about how the innovation is being used by different persons and this information can be recorded in an Innovation Configuration checklist (Heck, Stiegelbauer, Hall & Loucks, 1981).

It would seem that the concept of Innovation Configurations could be applied to evaluation utilization. Different individuals and different groups will use evaluations in different ways. Thus, if a list of components could be identified and descriptions of how each of these components varied were listed, a Configuration Checklist could be developed. This checklist could be used to assess implementation of evaluation by different users. A very simple beginning for a configuration component checklist for evaluation is provided as Figure 2. The components in this checklist relay heavily upon parts of the definition of utilization proposed by Alkin, Daillak and White (1979).

Interviewers and observers would collect information about how a particular evaluation was being used. The various components and component variations could be identified and circled on the configuration checklist. The resultant pattern would represent one configuration of use of an evaluation study. Alternate configurations might be found for other users at the same site or other sites. In addition a composite component checklist could be developed to address organizational use.

The next question is, which configurations represent "ideal" use of an evaluation study, what others are "acceptable" and which configurations are "unacceptable"? This question could be answered by the evaluators, it could be answered by the users or it could be made through some collaborative process. At any rate by having identified various configurations of use of the evaluation it would be possible to describe operationally what use means.

Once use has been determined in terms of the Level of Use and the Configuration that is being used has been described, questions that have to do with effects of use can be explored. Such questions as what are the influences of use upon evaluation decisions and what are the impacts of these decisions can be explored. Some intermediate questions could also be examined. How does the quality of decision making change as evaluation users change from being at Mechanical Use to Refinement use? Are certain configurations of evaluation use found more frequently at some Levels of Use? Are certain configuration components of evaluation use more easily adopted? The steps for the change process researcher in studying any of these questions would be to first assess use and describe what this means in operational terms. Then analyses of quality and consequences of use could be addressed.

Defining Utilization as an Innovation

Three questions have been explored in this paper. This author's brief answers to these questions are:

(1) What is utilization?

Use is having each person a user (Level of Use III through VI) of certain configurations of evaluation use. Rather than viewing use as a dichotomous variable, use is defined in terms of what Level of Use each person is demonstrating and what component variations of evaluation use they are using. At all times the emphasis is on behavioral and operational descriptions of use.

(2) How do you determine utilization?

If use of evaluations is a process then the preferred study design is longitudinal, with cross-sectional designs being a second possibility. Use of evaluation must be assessed across time and evaluation studies within an organization. To judge use by observing use of one evaluation study at one point in time is equivalent to treating use as an event, rather than the process that it is. For across organization considerations, perhaps it is possible to look at use of one evaluation, but there would need to be some form of stratification to be sure that the sample has a range in experience and sophistication of users.

To assess use would entail conducting focused interviews to assess Levels of Use and development of an Innovation Configuration Checklist that could be assessed through a combination of interview and observation procedures. The resultant data could be analyzed to identify and describe the various configurations of the evaluation that were being used.

(3) What are some implications for practice and research?

There are several implications that develop out of the above, a few of the more salient ones are briefly described next.

(a) Use has to be documented first hand. Drawing inferences about how evaluations are being used by assessing a select few key decision makers or even more remote policy makers will not suffice. The first line users of the evaluation information will have to be pulsed to determine whether or not and how evaluations are being used.

(b) Evaluators need to shift their perspective from seeing evaluation use as an event to its being a process. Users of evaluations do not instantaneously become expert, highly proficient and sophisticated in their use of evaluations. Rather, developing sophistication and understanding in using evaluations requires time and experience. Thus, evaluation use has similar characteristics to any other innovation where users gradually develop mastery.

By viewing use of evaluation as a process, evaluators may find that with assistance and time inefficient or less able initial use of evaluations can lead to higher level use. The corollary also holds, more sophisticated users probably have had more experience in using evaluations.

(c) Evaluators should recognize that evaluations and evaluators are innovations. When working with new clients all of the typical change process phenomenon are likely to occur. New adopters will be confused and will make mistakes. There will be some personal threat. The quality of decisions will not always be high. So it is important that evaluators develop their change process skills and be willing to invest the time it takes to get an "adoption". Delivery of the final report or a one time presentation of the

findings will not provide the necessary ongoing support to facilitate use of evaluations.

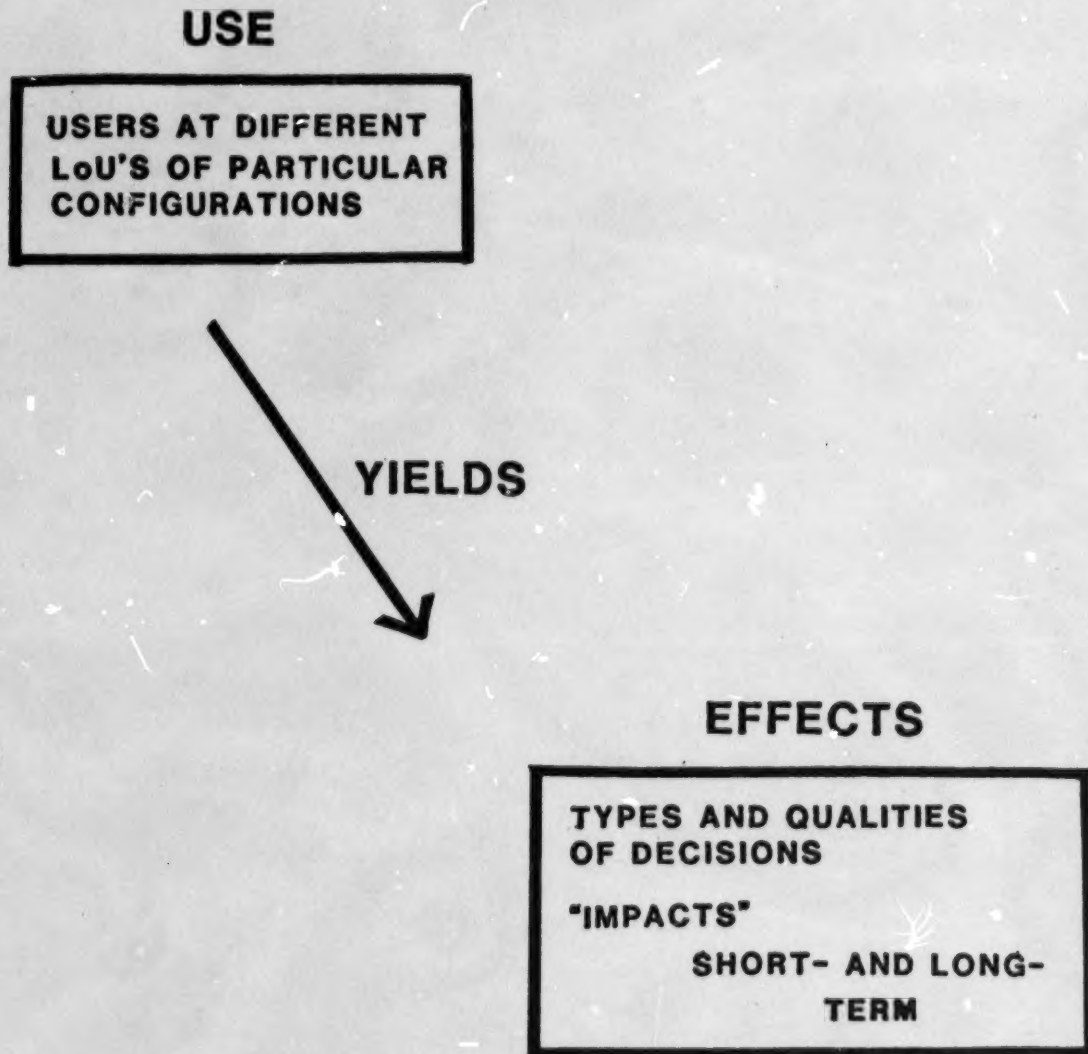
(d) Early definitions of evaluation utilization appear to have confused the effects of use with use, as is illustrated in Figure 3. From a change process perspective evaluating utilization first entails determining whether or not there are users and what particular configurations of the evaluation are being used. Are evaluators consulted directly? Are evaluation reports read and understood? When decisions are made are there overt attempts to incorporate evaluation information into the decision making process? These are evaluation use questions that will provide descriptions of use. Then the effects of utilization questions can be asked.

Effects of use, entail examining the consequences of use of evaluations. A different set of variables need to be assessed here. Effects of use address such dimensions as the quality of decisions that are made, with and without evaluation, the number of actors that are involved in decision making, and the extent of change that results.

It may be that some evaluators who have been considering the definition of utilization have implicitly defined utilization as effects only. The bottom part of Figure 3 is an illustration of how this would look. In this view use is subsumed under effects. Effects then become synonymous with use. Again, from the change process researcher's point of view it is important that evaluators distinguish between the use of evaluations and the effects of use. Evaluations could be incorporated into decision making in several different configurations and the effects of use of these different configurations could be quite different.

Figure 3
Alternative Definitions of Utilization

Use Leading to Effects



Use Subsumed

UTILIZATION

:

EFFECTS
(USE)

Hopefully these distinctions will help in clarifying some of the issues in analyzing and defining evaluation utilization. In addition perhaps they will catalyze the establishment of closer linkages between the well developed literature in evaluation and the research that is being done on the change process. This may be a case where research from two different disciplines can be merged in a complimentary way to help both in understanding the phenomenon that they are studying.

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